The Sounding Sheet

Six harbors. One honest number each. Side 1 of 2.

Captain _____ **Business** _____ **Date** _____

BEFORE YOU SCORE: DEFINE YOUR BUSINESS, THEN NAME YOUR WATER

1. What is my business? _____

2. What will it be? _____

3. What should it be? _____

The water you sail: the market, not your industry _____

Peter Drucker's three questions, from Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices (1973).

Every business runs on the same six harbors. Read the question, give it a number from 0 to 10, and move on: first instinct, no deliberating. The ladder on the back tells you what the numbers mean. **Score where you are today, not where you are heading.**

H **Human Capital**: your crew
Talent, team, and leadership depth — the people who sail with you.
If your top person quit tomorrow, is there an obvious next person to step into their role without skipping a beat?
/10

A **Acquisition**: your market
Marketing and sales working together to bring new prospects into the harbor.
Could you spend $5,000 on advertising tomorrow and know exactly where?
/10

R **Reputation**: your brand
How you are known — trust, reviews, and your position in the market.
Could a stranger tell what you stand for in thirty seconds?
/10

B **Build**: your product
What you offer — the product or service itself, its quality and its edge.
Can you describe the primary product or service your customers buy from you, in one sentence, without using the word "and"?
/10

O **Operations**: how you run
Systems, processes, and infrastructure — the ship running without heroics.
Do you know what your projected bank balance will be ninety days out?
/10

R **Retention**: your customers
Who stays — loyalty, lifetime value, and the customers who come back.
When a customer goes quiet, does anything happen?
/10

Now circle the lowest number. That is the harbor costing you money right now, whatever your instinct says. Turn over for what the numbers mean.

What the numbers mean

The same ladder for all six harbors. Side 2 of 2.

0–2	**It doesn't exist.** Nothing built, nothing written down.
3–4	**It lives in your head.** It happens when you make it happen, and stops when you're busy.
5–6	**It's built, but inconsistent.** It works when the right person is watching.
7–8	**It runs without you.** Written down, handed off, steady.
9–10	**It's a moat.** A competitor with real money couldn't match it inside a year.

THREE RULES FOR SCORING HONESTLY

Score what is, not what's planned. The intention doesn't count. Only the thing that already runs when you're not in the room.

When you're unsure, drop a point. The gut always guesses high, and it always guesses high in the same direction.

Then circle your lowest number, not your favorite one. The harbor you're proudest of is rarely the one costing you money.

THE THREE THAT ARE MANDATORY IN EACH HARBOR

Ten elements feed every harbor. These three are load-bearing: a harbor cannot sit above the middle of the ladder while one of them is missing.

HARBOR	THE THREE THAT MUST BE THERE
Human Capital	Talent Identification · Hiring Process · Culture & Operating Norms
Acquisition	Customer Targeting · Digital Presence · Search & Reviews
Reputation	Brand Keel · Visual Identity · Reviews & Recommendations
Build	Product Definition · Quality Standards · Pricing & Packaging
Operations	Financial Operations · Legal & Compliance · Standard Operating Procedures
Retention	Customer Onboarding · Customer Success / Account Management · Churn Diagnosis

Three at a time, never six. If any of the core three (Acquisition, Build, Operations) is not flowing yet, it is on your active list. Period. Once all three are established, your effort moves to Human Capital, Reputation, and Retention. Start with your lowest. The other three keep running; they are not being dredged.

The full build manual for a harbor, every element, every tier, worked start to finish, is the eight-page Harbor Worksheet, and the live builder saves your work as you go. Both are at thevibeentrepreneur.com/setsail. You do not need either one to start.